



SWRPC

Southwest Region
Planning Commission

NH Route 12 North Corridor Virtual Meeting
Held to inform SWRPC's update to the *Southwest Connects Long Range Transportation Plan*
Thursday October 26, 2022 6:30pm

Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC) held a virtual meeting on Wednesday, October 26, 2022 at 6:30 pm focused on the NH Route 12 North Corridor. This corridor runs from Keene to Walpole and also includes the Towns of Surry, Westmoreland, and Alstead. The corridor is one of eight major transportation corridors in the Southwest NH Region as depicted in the *Southwest Connects Long Range Transportation Plan*. This was the fourth meeting in a series of eight that SWRPC is holding over the next several months in 2022 and 2023. Each meeting will focus on one of the regional transportation corridors. The purpose of this meeting (and future meetings) is to share information about the corridor with local communities and to collect public input for the *Southwest Connects Long Range Transportation Plan*.

The following people attended the meeting: Bruce Smith (Westmoreland, Planning Board), Bryan Granger (CNS Wholesale Grocers, Keene), Jonathan Tomachick (ICU Medical, Keene), Bennett Daviss (Walpole), Anthony Sgueglia (Covenant Living, Keene), Paul Hinkle (Covenant Living, Keene), Wendy Grossman (Walpole), and Rebecca Sayles (Westmoreland).

The following information was covered and discussed (more detailed information is available by viewing the presentation at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0iixdSBldE)

- The NH Route 12 North Corridor is one of eight major transportation corridors in the Southwest NH Region, facilitating north-south traffic movements between Keene and Walpole. In addition to NH Route 12, this Corridor also includes parts of NH Routes 63, and 123 as well as non-numbered State routes in Walpole, Westmoreland, Keene, Surry, and Alstead – the five Towns identified as part of the Corridor. It is a highly trafficked corridor that is important for commuting, tourism, commerce, and other reasons.
- Between 2011-2020, there were 31 vehicle crashes on the Route 12 North Corridor that involved a serious injury, nine that involved a fatality, and one that involved a non-motorized fatality or serious injury. A majority of these crashes occurred on NH Route 12; several other vehicle crashes occurred on the other roads that are also included as part of the Corridor.
- The City of Keene and the Town of Walpole have complete streets policies and design guidelines to guide safety improvements for the benefit of all road users.
- To improve safety for pedestrian and bicyclists, the City of Keene has completed a Safe Routes to School planning initiative for Keene Middle School in 2016 and the Park Ave-Cheshire Rail Trail Loop Project, which connects the Cheshire Rail Trail with neighborhoods in West Keene, in 2022.

- Between 2013 and 2020, significant increases in traffic occurred on the NH Route 12 North Corridor. There was a 22.5% increase in traffic volume on the NH Route 12 at the Surry Town Line (22.5%). There was a 13.4% increase in traffic volume in Walpole on NH Route 123 east of NH Route 12. There was a 13.2% increase in traffic volume on NH Route 12 in Westmoreland north of Woodward Road (13.2%).
- Approximately 12,143 commuters per day enter the corridor from outside towns. 7,851 people live on this corridor and commute to outside towns. In addition, there are 6,914 people that live and work on this corridor. The top commuting destinations for residents of the NH Route 12 North Corridor are: Hanover, Keene, Lebanon, Rockingham, VT, and Walpole.
- Although limited, this corridor contains some transportation alternatives to the personal automobile. These alternative transportation options include: transit services offered by Home Healthcare Hospice & Community Service (HCS) and the Vermont-based MOOVER, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, the Cheshire Rail Trail, and a volunteer driver program operated by Community Volunteer Transportation Company.
- The Cheshire Branch of the Cheshire Rail Trail runs parallel to NH Route 12 along this Corridor.

The following safety concerns and suggestions were shared by participants at the meeting:

- Jonathan Tomachick, representing ICU Medical located on Bowman Drive in Keene, reported that the intersection of Corporate Drive, Wyman Road and NH Route 12 is a hazardous intersection. There is sloping terrain on NH Route 12 to the southeast of the intersection and a curve on NH Route 12 northwest of the intersection. There is extensive traffic at this intersection from workers at ICU Medical and CNS Wholesale Grocers. Bowman Drive is located off of Wyman Road, and nearly all of the 325 employees working at ICU Medical use this intersection on a daily basis. An employee of ICU Medical was involved in a serious car accident at this intersection while leaving work in 2021. Mr. Tomachick recommends using traffic precautions at this intersection, such as a traffic light or roundabout.
- Anthony Sgueglia, representing Covenant Living on Wyman Road in Keene, seconded the concern raised by Mr. Tomachick. Mr. Sgueglia also believes that the intersection of Corporate Drive, Wyman Road, and NH Route 12 is hazardous. He is concerned about the growing number of Covenant Living residents and employees who also use this intersection on a daily basis.
- Bryan Granger, representing CNS Wholesale Grocers on Corporate Drive in Keene, echoed the concerns of Mr. Tomachick and Mr. Sgueglia. Mr. Granger also believes the intersection of Corporate Drive, Wyman Road and NH Route 12 is hazardous, and he supports the installation of a roundabout or another means to slow traffic.
- Paul Hinkle, a resident of Covenant Living in Keene, also echoed the concerns raised by others. Mr. Hinkle also believes the intersection of Corporate Drive, Wyman Road, and NH Route 12 is hazardous. He has concerns about the residents and staff of Covenant Living who use this intersection on a daily basis. Mr. Hinkle also supports the installation of a roundabout or traffic light to slow traffic. Mr. Hinkle also noted that there are additional acres of developable land near this intersection with water, sewer, and electricity already available, which presents an economic development opportunity. Future development will cause an increase in traffic, further compounding the danger at this intersection. A roundabout at the intersection of Corporate Drive, Wyman Road, and NH Route 12 would enhance the economic development opportunity while also addressing safety.

- Mr. Hinkle noted that there have been improvements to the Cheshire Rail trail near Summit Road and the Keene YMCA; however, it is difficult for bicyclists and pedestrians to access Wyman Road because there is no safe crossing of NH Route 12. A safe road crossing on NH Route 12 for bicyclists and pedestrians would provide access to the employers on Wyman Road from the Hastings Avenue and Park Avenue neighborhoods.
- Mr. Tomachick seconded the concerns raised by Mr. Hinkle about bicycle and pedestrian safety on NH Route 12. Mr. Tomachick stated that some employees at ICU Medical walk and bicycle to work, and they are faced with unsafe travel conditions on NH Route 12.
- Bennett Daviss reported that there is a hazardous intersection in Walpole at the Junction of NH Routes 12 and 123 and Upper Walpole Road.
- Mr. Daviss noted that posted speed limits are frequently disregarded on NH Route 12 in Walpole. This creates problems when drivers turn onto NH Route 12 from feeder roads. The Town of Walpole has been reluctant to request traffic lights because of the traffic clogs that would result; however, this issue remains a problem.
- Bruce Smith reported that high vehicle speed is a problem on NH Route 12 in Westmoreland, especially near the eastern and western Town boundary.
- Mr. Smith also noted that undeveloped land on NH Route 12 in Westmoreland is zoned commercial, and there may be more traffic in the future if this area is developed. He also noted that the traffic has been increasing on Glebe Road.
- Mr. Smith also noted that NH Route 12 is a major highway and well-traveled commercial route. Frequently, there are trucks turning on and off of NH Route 12 in Westmoreland to access Tree Huggers Farms and the nearby gravel bit, which can present a safety hazard.
- Mr. Smith also noted that there are red-list bridges in need of upgrades on River Road in Westmoreland, which forces truck traffic to use NH Route 63.
- Mr. Daviss noted that excessive vehicle speed on NH Route 12A in Surry is an issue.

The following comments were shared by participants at the meeting about the diversity of transportation options available in the corridor:

- The Vermont-based MOOVER transit service provides limited service to the Town of Walpole from Bellows Falls, VT. Representatives from the Town of Walpole have expressed interest in expanding the MOOVER's service into the Walpole Village.
- Mr. Daviss stated that he is in favor of expanded transit service within the Town of Walpole as well as to other Towns to the north.
- Community Volunteer Transportation Company (CVTC) is a volunteer driver organization that serves all Towns on the Corridor. The amount of service that CVTC can provide is limited by the number of volunteer drivers available. Towns that are concerned about a lack of transportation for non-drivers may consider recruiting volunteers to drive in their Town.

The following concerns and suggestions were shared by participants at the meeting about natural disasters and human-caused hazards in the corridor:

- Mr. Smith noted that Mill Brook in Westmoreland has flooded a number of times near NH Route 12.
- Rebecca Sayles noted that trees present a natural hazard and asked how hazard trees are monitored along roadways.